

DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Wildlife and Fisheries Commission

Reef Fish - Harvest Regulations 2013-2014 Recreational Reef Fish Seasons

The reef fish fishery in the Gulf of Mexico is cooperatively managed by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission (LWFC) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) with advice from the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council). Regulations promulgated by NMFS are applicable in waters of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the United States. NMFS typically requests consistent regulations in order to enhance the effectiveness and enforceability of regulations for EEZ waters. However, there may be a need for state regulations to differ from regulations promulgated by NMFS at times.

Recreational season rules have been established for reef fish in the Gulf of Mexico and in Louisiana state waters and both fisheries operate under recreational quotas. If the quota is projected to be reached, NMFS is required by law to close the season to restrain fishing within the established quota for the species in water of the EEZ.

Adoption of compatible regulations for Louisiana state waters where and when feasible enhances effectiveness and enforceability of the regulations already in place for reef fishes harvested in the EEZ off of Louisiana. Unforeseen circumstances may occur which may lead to modification of the recreational seasons to restrain the fisheries within the recreational quota, requiring a modification in established regulations.

In accordance with the emergency provisions of R.S. 49:953 which allows the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission to employ emergency procedures to promulgate seasonal rules to set finfish seasons, R.S. 56:6(25) (a) and R.S. 56:326.3 which provide that the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission may set seasons for saltwater finfish, the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission hereby declares:

The secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is hereby authorized to modify those portions of LAC 76:VII.335 pertaining to any reef fish recreational daily harvest limits and any reef fish recreational seasons if NOAA–NMFS institutes sub-regional management for the any reef fish species, a state allocation or quota has been met, or if he deems it necessary, following notification of the chairperson of the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission.

Such authority shall extend through January 31, 2014.

Ann L. Taylor
Chairman